

INTERNAL-EXTERNAL CONTROL AS A
DETERMINANT OF INFORMATION-SEEKING
IN A SOCIAL INFLUENCE SITUATION

by

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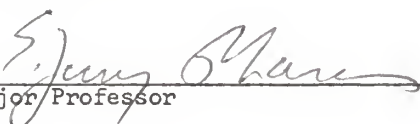
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Traditionally, in psychological research, subjects are assigned a passive role with respect to their control over incoming stimuli. This paradigm is most clearly exemplified in two major areas of research in social psychology, person perception and communication. Concerning the latter area Bauer (1964) notes that this one-way model has not proved to be particularly fruitful in the study of social communication. In its place he offers a transactional model in which the individual may exert an active role in controlling the input of stimuli or information available to him. Recognition of this two-way communication model has permitted a resolution of the apparent contradiction between laboratory and field studies of informational effects on attitude change (Bauer, 1964).

Much the same thing is true in the area of person perception. That is, emphasis has been centered around the way in which people form impressions of others from fixed amounts of information. In most real-life situations, however, a person, in forming impressions of others has some control over the amount and kind of information he may receive about the other person. Thus, he may be content with limited amounts of information or he may actively seek additional information. It would appear, then, that an important, but relatively neglected, area of study centers on the investigation of variables which may affect a person's preference for varying kinds and amounts of information. It is the purpose of this study to investigate some conditions which may be related to differential preferences for information.

It has been suggested by Jones and Thibaut (1958) that a person in any social situation will act in such a way as to reduce the need for information to sustain the interaction process. Moreover, people do not

seem to be indiscriminate in the cues they select, but rather, seek information relevant to their purposes in the situation of interaction. In addition to the given situation, personality characteristics of the perceiver may determine the strategy appropriate for his performance in the interaction situation. Within any social situation certain personality characteristics may be related to how the individual defines the situation and his behavior in the situation, which would in turn lead to differential information preferences. Thus, on a general level of analysis there seem to be two important classes of variables which might influence information-seeking behavior in a social situation, the structure and requirements of the situation itself and the personality characteristics of the participants that are involved. This general model of behavior is consistent with that provided by Social Learning Theory in which behavior is viewed explicitly as a function of both the person and psychological situation (Rotter, 1954).

More specifically, this latter theory states that the potentiality for a particular behavior to occur in a given situation is a function of the expectancy that this behavior will lead to a particular reinforcement and the value of that reinforcement. Explicit in the construct properties of behavior potential, expectancy, and reinforcement value is the emphasis on the cue value of the situation. Here, specific situational cues that have acquired meaning determine both the expectation that certain behaviors will be reinforced and the value of that reinforcement. The present study will follow this general theoretical framework.

Recently, it has been suggested that an important variable in behavior theory is the internal vs. external control of reinforcement dimension (Rotter, 1966; Lefcourt, 1966). This variable has developed within the context of Social Learning Theory. Internal-external control may be defined as the extent to which individuals believe that the occurrence of reinforcement is contingent upon their own behavior. External control refers to the perception that reinforcements are controlled by outside forces such as chance, luck, or powerful others, and occur independent of one's own behavior. Internal control represents the perception that reinforcements are a consequence of one's own behavior.

Research related to the internal-external control variable has followed two main directions. In the first, internal-external control expectancies have been manipulated by varying the task structure of the situation. This was done by presenting a relatively ambiguous task to a group of subjects and instructing them that success is dependent on either skill or chance. Under skill instructions, a contingency between one's own behavior and task success is induced, while under chance instructions the subject is led to believe that successful performance is not dependent on his own behavior but is rather a matter of chance or luck. Task structure has also been manipulated by presenting two different tasks which have been previously defined by cultural experience as essentially skill or chance determined. A number of studies have yielded results consistent with the general hypothesis that learning functions differ in skill and chance situations. For example, in the first of these studies, Phares (1957) found that in the skill condition,

reinforcements had a greater effect on changing expectancies for future reinforcements than they did in the chance condition. In another study James and Rotter (1958) investigated the extinction of verbal expectancies. They found that partial reinforcement produced superior resistance to extinction only under conditions in which task success was defined as chance determined. In the skill condition, number of trials to extinction was longer for the 100% reinforcement group than the partial reinforcement group. These general skill-chance differences have been replicated and extended with several different reinforcement schedules (Rotter, Liverant, & Crowne, 1961), a behavioral criterion of expectancy (Holden & Rotter, 1962), generalization of expectancies (James, 1957), and perceptual threshold for threatening stimuli (Phares, 1962).

Concurrent with studies manipulating skill and chance in a situational context has been the development of a scale to measure individual differences in a generalized expectancy regarding the nature of causal relationships between one's own behavior and the occurrence of reward. In general, an internally oriented person is conceived as one who tends to believe that he is the effective controlling agent in the occurrence of reinforcement. The externally oriented person, on the other hand, is one who feels that reinforcement is controlled by forces outside himself and occurs independent of his actions. In effect, internal-external control is a generalized expectancy continuum relating behavior to reinforcement in a wide variety of situations. The first attempt to measure individual differences in internal-external control was initiated by Phares (1957). The original scale was modified by James (1957) and finally revised into a forced-choice by Liverant,

Rotter, & Crowne (Rotter, 1966). The present test is composed of 23 items and 6 filler items. Reliability and validity data on this scale have been examined in a number of studies. Adequate internal consistency and test-retest reliability have been demonstrated. The test has been found to correlate with other measures of this variable such as questionnaires, Likert scales, interviews, and ratings from a story-completion technique. Discriminant validity is indicated by its low correlation with measures of intelligence and social desirability (Rotter, 1966). Most striking is evidence related to the test's construct validity in which behavioral differences are predicted on the basis of the conceptual properties of the scale. For example internals and externals differ in the number of unusual shifts in expectancy (James, 1957; Battle & Rotter, 1963), risk-taking (Liverant & Scodel, 1960), attempts to control the environment (Gore & Rotter, 1963), tendency to forget failure experiences (Efran, 1963), degree of conformity (Crowne & Liverant, 1963), preference for skill and chance reinforcements (Rotter & Mulry, 1965), and resistance to subtle influence (Gore, 1962).

More closely related to the present research are studies involving internal-external control and attitudes toward information and social influence. For example, in a study by Seeman and Evans (1962), two groups of hospitalized tuberculosis patients were matched on socioeconomic and hospital experience variables, but differed in terms of internal-external control. Consistent with their predictions, they found that internals had more objective information concerning their illness, were rated by members of the hospital staff as having more knowledge of their illness, and were unsatisfied with the information they received in the ward. This study was later followed by one involving

reformatory inmates in which memory for various kinds of information was investigated. Information was presented to the inmates concerning factors related to achieving successful parole, the present reformatory setting, and long-range prospects for a non-criminal career. Again, as predicted, there was a significant correlation between their I-E scores and the amount of parole material recalled. There were no differences between internals and externals in retention of the other two kinds of information. This finding is important in that it strongly implies that internals are superior in recall only when information is relevant to control of personal goals. When information is not particularly pertinent for future behavior there are no differences between internals and externals. These two studies, in general, suggest that internally oriented persons are more alert to those aspects of their environment which may be relevant for future behavior.

In view of the previous research and on the basis of the construct properties of the I-E dimension it is suggested that internals and externals differ not only in attentiveness to and recall of information that is already present in the environment, as demonstrated in the Seeman and Evans (1962) and Seeman (1963) studies, but also in terms of actively seeking additional relevant information. Thus, it is the major aim of this present research to examine the generality of the I-E construct as it relates to information-seeking behavior. Essentially, internals, having a higher generalized expectancy that reinforcements are contingent upon their own behavior, should make attempts to more effectively control their environment through seeking out relevant information. Externals, on the other hand, would have less need to seek information since outcomes tend to be perceived as less dependent on

their own actions.

In order to test this hypothesis, it was decided to utilize a social influence situation in which Ss would believe their task was to attempt to influence the attitude of another person concerning the war in Vietnam. To this end, internals and externals should differ when given the opportunity to acquire information both about the other person they would be attempting to influence and about the Vietnam issue itself. Previous research by Phares (1965) has shown that "internal" experimenters are more effective in inducing attitude change in subjects than are "external" experimenters. On this basis, then, it would further be anticipated that externals, having a lower generalized expectancy that they can control their environment should seek less information since the information would not be perceived as particularly useful for future outcomes. Specifically, it was predicted that internals will seek more information about the person they will attempt to influence and about the Vietnam issue itself than will externally oriented subjects.

The importance of taking into account the psychological situation, as well as personality variables, in the prediction of behavior has been noted many times (Thomas, 1951; Murray, 1952; Rotter, 1954, 1955, 1960; Phares & Rotter, 1956). Yet, with this emphasis, relatively few studies systematically vary both the situation and the personality variables under investigation. The increase in predictive power when both kinds of variables are examined is illustrated in a study of the relationship between aggressiveness, as measured by the TAT and overt behavior (Lesser, 1959). In this study, comparisons were made between boys whose mothers encouraged aggressive behavior and boys whose mothers discouraged such behavior. Where aggressive behavior was encouraged

there was a significant positive correlation between aggressiveness on TAT stories and overt aggressiveness. Conversely, where such behavior was discouraged, there was a significant negative relationship between TAT and overt aggression. If maternal behavior toward aggression had not been taken into account the relationship would have been essentially zero. Thus, in this study, not only was predictive power increased, but important additional information was added concerning the conditions under which test behavior is related to overt behavior.

In the present study, in order to examine the generality of the relationship between information-seeking and individual differences in internal-external control, two additional situations were included. In one condition Ss will be instructed that influencing the attitude of another person is a matter of skill and therefore under personal control, while in the other condition Ss will be told that attitude change is largely due to factors such as chance and luck over which they have little personal control. Thus, an attempt will be made to experimentally manipulate specific expectancies for personal control over the outcome of the social influence process. Rotter (1966) has hypothesized that the more clearly a situation is labeled as skill or chance determined, the smaller the role a generalized expectancy regarding behavior-reinforcement sequences will play in determining individual differences in behavior. Stated in another way, the presence of explicit environmental cues related to the nature of the contingency between behavior and outcome should increase the importance of the specific expectancy for internal or external control and diminish such a generalized expectancy. Based on this reasoning, it is therefore predicted that the magnitude of the difference in information-seeking between internals and

externals will be smaller in the skill and chance situations than in the condition in which no explicit skill-chance cues are presented (ambiguous situation). Moreover, in the skill condition the specific expectancy that outcomes follow from behavior should evoke more information-seeking than in the chance condition in which attitude change is perceived as a function of factors independent of behavior. If Ss perceive that they have personal control over the modification of another person's attitude, then information about this other person and about the content of the issue should be seen as more relevant to their task.

METHOD

Summary

Each of a group of 42 internal and 42 external male Ss, selected on the basis of the 29 item I-E scale, were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions--skill, chance, or ambiguous. Ss were led to believe that they would later attempt to influence the attitude of another person concerning the war in Vietnam. Skill Ss were told that success in influencing another person's attitude depends on the skill and ability of the persuader. Chance Ss were instructed that attitude change is dependent upon chance and luck factors. In the ambiguous condition, Ss were given neither skill nor chance instructions. During the general procedure, Ss were given the opportunity to acquire information both about the other person they would attempt to influence and about the Vietnam issue itself. Thus, the basic design is a 2 X 3 factorial, incorporating two levels of internal-external control and three levels of the situation.

Subjects

The I-E scale was administered to approximately 500 males and 300 females in four large general psychology classes at Kansas State University. At the same time, a scale containing six Likert-type attitude items and eight true-false objective information items concerning the war in Vietnam was administered. On the basis of this data, collected approximately two to three weeks before the experiment, two groups of Ss were formed. One group consisted of 42 males (internals) with scores on the I-E scale ranging from 18-23 and the other group was composed of 42 males (externals) who received I-E scores from 0-10. These groups represented the upper 19% and lower 18% of the I-E distribution, respectively. In addition, these two groups were matched on the basis of their scores on the Attitude Toward the War in Vietnam Questionnaire. The I-E scale is given in Appendix A and the questionnaire is given in Appendix B. Only those Ss indicating a favorable attitude concerning continued United States military support to Vietnam (scores from 20-24) were included in the two groups. Ss received either credit toward their grade in general psychology or were paid \$1.00 for their participation in the experiment.

Procedure

Individual Ss were led to a small experimental room and seated at a desk with their backs to a one-way mirror. They were then read the following instructions:

This is a study of social influence and attitude change. As you know, lately there has been expressed a great deal of concern regarding the behavior of persons protesting the United States'

involvement in the war in Vietnam. The popular labels ascribed to these persons are "Vietniks," "draft-card burners," and so on. Recently psychologists have become interested in studying the attitudes, motives, and personalities of these protestors, and how they differ from people that do support the government's position in regards to the war in Vietnam. Here at K-State we have also been involved in this kind of research. To date, we have collected a great deal of data on a number of K-State students who have protested our government's policy in the Vietnam war. We have conducted a number of interviews and administered a variety of psychological tests to these people. We now have information on these students concerning such things as their religious and political affiliations, socio-economic and family background, personality and temperamental traits, intellectual level, and their attitudes toward such issues as civil rights, the welfare state, the draft, Communism, and specifically toward the war in Vietnam. In short, then, we have a fairly comprehensive picture of these persons' attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and personalities.

This present study we are doing, the one you will be involved in, is concerned with social influence. As you may remember, at the beginning of the semester in your general psychology class a questionnaire was administered concerning your attitude about Vietnam. What we have done is to choose people with varying opinions about the issue to serve as influencers. In other words, we would like to see if you can persuade or influence, to some degree, a person protesting governmental policy about Vietnam around to a position more similar to your own. Okay?

At this point the three experimental conditions were differentiated according to the further instruction as follows:

(Skill condition) Other investigators studying attitude change have consistently found that whether attitudes change or not depends on the skill and ability of the person attempting to induce the change. This is also what we have found in this study so far. That is, a skillful persuader--one that has ability in this area--can successfully modify a subject's attitude concerning the Vietnam issue. What we are interested in is determining what proportion of people like yourself seem to have this ability to influence the attitude of another person.

(Chance condition) Other investigators studying attitude change and persuasion have consistently found that whether attitudes change or not is a matter of chance or luck. People's attitudes are highly complex and change does not seem to be predictable, sometimes they change and other times not. In addition, whether attitudes change or not, to a large part, depends on the personalities of the two people involved. If, by chance, the persuader and the person being persuaded have the right combination of personalities then attitude change may occur. This is what we

have found so far in this study. That is, the skill of the persuader isn't related to whether or not the subject will change his attitude about the Vietnam issue. If you are lucky enough to get a subject with the right kind of personality then change may take place--sometimes this happens and sometimes it doesn't. Thus we are essentially interested in how often such chance and luck factors operate to influence attitude change.

(Ambiguous condition) Neither chance nor skill instruction were read.

Following one of these three sets of instructions, all Ss were read the remainder of the instructions.

This is how the procedure will run. I'll first give you a few minutes to think about any questions you might have concerning the person you will attempt to influence. I'll then try to answer these questions for you. Then you'll be given some time to plan your strategy--what you'll say to the other person and so on. After that you'll have contact with the other person and will attempt to influence him--to change his opinion about the Vietnam issue. I might add here that you will sit in this room and the other person in another room and will communicate through this intercom system. This is done because the information I have on the other person is of a confidential nature and we want to make sure that anonymity is maintained.

S was then given a sheet upon which were listed the names and descriptions of a number of tests and interviews which the other person supposedly had taken. Examples of a few of the tests and interviews are:

(1) Questionnaire on attitude toward the war in Vietnam, (5) Interview on family background, ideals, and discipline, (8) Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale. The remaining instructions were read:

Here is a list of the various tests and interviews we have given the other person which you will attempt to influence. You may want to have more information about the person concerning some of the specific items listed. However, I don't want to spend time going over information which you think would be irrelevant. Thus, I'll give you a few minutes to look this sheet over and think of specific questions you would like to ask me about this information. If you have any questions you can jot them down on this sheet of paper. After answering your questions, if you have any, you can have some additional time to plan out your strategy--the things you want to say to the other person. I'll be waiting in another room. When you're finished looking over this sheet you can signal me by pressing this button which is hooked up to a buzzer in my room.

After S indicated that he understood the nature of the experiment, E left the room to allow S to write his questions. E returned to the experimental room upon S's signal, and presented to him a standard set of "preliminary information" about the other person. At this point the procedure was interrupted by a "stooge" informing E that he had a phone call in the office (or that someone wanted to see him in the hall). E excused himself and indicated casually to S that there were some magazines on the desk that he could look at if he chose. E then left the experimental room to observe S through the one-way screen. The covers of two of the three magazines clearly indicated that the magazines contained articles related to the Vietnam war. Some of the magazines contained information relevant to the Vietnam issue while other material was clearly not relevant. The magazine articles and the amount of time spent on that article were recorded. After 10 minutes E returned to the experimental room to inform S that the other person just called to say that he couldn't come in for the experiment at this time. S was then asked if he could return in three or four weeks to continue the experiment. Before leaving, S was given the following instructions and administered the Information Questionnaire. This questionnaire is given in Appendix C.

When you return later to continue the experiment we would like to give you a chance to have as much information about this subject and the Vietnam issue as you would like. We have prepared some booklets containing information about various aspects of the issue. Subjects like yourself have found some of this information more useful--other information less useful. Also, subjects prefer greater or lesser amounts of information, some prefer no additional information. Now will you indicate on this sheet the information and amount you would like to look at when you return later for the experiment.

The Information Questionnaire consisted of 6 items dealing with various kinds of information. Ss indicated their preference for this information by circling one of six points along the scale ranging from "no more information" to "a great deal more." The questionnaire included items such as the following:

2. Information concerning the government's policy toward Vietnam.
4. Information about some techniques to use in persuasion.
5. Information that has been used by some to argue against the government's policy toward Vietnam.

Measures of Information-Seeking

The major dependent variables were the number of questions that S directed to E about the other person that he would be attempting to influence and the amount of time that S spent looking at magazine articles relevant to the Vietnam issue. It might be noted that these two dependent variables constitute relatively independent sources of information. In one case, information is related to the target of the influence process--the other person himself--and in the other measure, information is available concerning the content of the issue. In addition, the Information Questionnaire comprised the third measure of information-seeking. Here, a variety of items are included regarding preferences for such information as persuasion techniques, arguments pro and con concerning the Vietnam issue, and information about the other person.

RESULTS

The essential data for the "questions-asked" measure consist of a count of the number of questions S directed to E about information concerning the other person. Examples of typical questions written by Ss were, "Why does he protest the war?," "What is his I.Q.?,", and "How much does he know about the Vietnam situation?." Two or more questions that appeared to be restatements of one another were scored as one question. In order to examine scorer reliability, a random selection of question protocols written by 30 Ss was independently scored by a second judge who had no knowledge of S's I-E or group status. The Pearson correlation between the two judges' ratings (number of questions asked) for each S was quite high ($r = .97$) indicating satisfactory interscorer reliability. Since initial inspection of the data indicated that the means and variances were substantially correlated, it was considered advisable to perform a square root transformation ($\sqrt{X+1}$) on each of the scores (Edwards, 1960). The means and standard deviations for both the transformed and non-transformed scores are given in Table 1. The following analyses on this measure employed the transformed "questions-asked" scores.

The main hypothesis of this study was that internals will seek more information than externals in an ambiguous situation. This prediction was tested by means of Duncan's New Multiple Range Test (MRT) shown in Table 2. From this table it can be seen that the mean transformed "questions-asked" score was 2.75 for internals and 1.93 for external Ss. The difference was significant at $p .05$.

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for
Number of "Questions-Asked" Measure

	Skill Situation		Ambiguous Situation		Chance Situation	
	Internals (N=14)	Externals (N=14)	Internals (N=14)	Externals (N=14)	Internals (N=14)	Externals (N=14)
M	7.57	2.93	7.14	3.29	3.71	5.29
SD	4.94	3.55	4.14	3.55	3.72	4.22
X+1 transformation						
M	2.80	1.79	2.75	1.93	2.00	2.37
SD	.893	.894	.825	.919	.892	.801

Table 2

Duncan's New Multiple Range Test on the Differences
Between the Means of the Number of Questions Asked

	Internal-External Control, Situation					
	Skill- External	Ambiguous- External	Chance- Internal	Chance- External	Ambiguous- Internal	Skill- Internal
Means	1.79	1.93	2.00	2.37	2.75	2.80
1.79		.14	.21	.58	.96	1.01
1.93			.07	.44	.82	.87
2.00				.37	.75	.80
2.37					.38	.43
2.75						.05
2.80						

Any two means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at p .05.

In order to test the other two hypotheses, that more information would be sought in a skill situation than in a chance situation, and that the magnitude of the difference in information-seeking between internals and externals would be greater in the ambiguous condition than in either the skill or chance condition, an analysis of variance was performed and orthogonal comparisons made (Edwards, 1960). The results of this procedure, shown in Table 3, indicated that neither the skill vs. chance nor the I-E X Situation ambiguous vs. skill+chance comparisons were significant ($F < 1.000$ & $F = 1.530$, respectively). Further examination of Table 3, apart from these hypotheses, shows that internals tended to ask significantly more questions averaged over all three situations ($p < .025$). The highly significant I-E X Situation interaction ($p < .01$) would, however, indicate caution in interpreting this main effect. The differences among means represented in Table 2 suggest that only in the skill and ambiguous situations did internals seek more information than externals (MRT $p < .01$, $p < .05$), while in the chance condition there were no significant differences between internals and externals ($p > .10$). Moreover, internals in both the skill and ambiguous conditions have significantly higher mean "questions-asked" scores than internals in the chance condition (MRT $p < .05$). Externals, on the other hand, did not differ significantly across the skill, chance, and ambiguous conditions. Thus, a large part of the variance in the I-E X Situation interaction is due to the sharp decrement in information-seeking among internals when they are told that influencing the attitude of another person is a matter of chance or luck.

Table 3
Analysis of Variance of the Number
of Questions Asked

Source	df	MS	F
Internal-External Control (I-E)	1	4.940	6.500*
Situation (S)	2	.176	<1.000
skill vs. chance	1	.167	<1.000
ambiguous vs. skill+chance	1	.185	<1.000
I-E X S	2	3.949	5.196**
I-E X S skill vs. chance	1	6.735	8.862***
I-E X S ambiguous vs. skill+chance	1	1.163	1.530
Error	78	.760	
Total	83		

* $p < .025$

** $p < .01$

*** $p < .005$

The second measure of information-seeking was the amount of time spent on magazine articles relevant to the Vietnam issue. The amount of prior information about the Vietnam war was controlled through the use of the Information Test which contained eight true-false items related to objective knowledge about the Vietnam issue. In order to determine whether it would be necessary to statistically control for the amount of prior information, the total number of correct answers on this test was correlated with the amount of time spent on relevant magazine articles. The results indicated no relationship between these two

scores ($r = .06$). An analysis of variance and a Duncan's Multiple Range Test were computed on the magazine time scores. Results of these analyses shown in Table 4 indicated no difference in mean time spent on the relevant articles among the six groups.

Table 4
Analysis of Variance of Time Spent
on Relevant Magazine Articles

Source	df	MS	F
Internal-External Control (I-E)	1	2170.58	< 1.000
Situation (S)	2	1526.10	< 1.000
skill vs. chance	1	189.45	< 1.000
ambiguous vs. skill+chance	1	2862.75	< 1.000
Situation X I-E	2	13809.80	< 1.000
I-E X S skill vs. chance	1	17821.45	< 1.000
I-E X S ambiguous vs. skill+chance	1	9798.15	< 1.000
Error	78	47749.32	
Total	83		

The Information Questionnaire constituted the third measure of information-seeking. An analysis of variance and a Duncan's Multiple Range Test were applied to both the total score on this Questionnaire and to each of the six items separately. While the results of the analysis on the total score indicated little difference among groups, there was a slight trend for internals to express a preference for more information ($M = 26.14$) than externals ($M = 21.14$) in the skill condition ($MRT p < .10$). A similar analysis was performed on each item in

the Questionnaire. There were no significant differences among groups on any of the items, although over five of the six items, internals in the skill situation had consistently higher mean preference scores for additional information than did externals.

In order to determine whether other variables could have contributed to the obtained results, the relationships between I-E, prior information about the Vietnam issue, and intelligence were examined. The mean score on the eight-item Information Test for the 42 internal Ss was 5.83 and for the 42 external Ss, 5.57. A t test on the difference between these means indicated that internals and externals did not differ in the amount of prior information they possessed about the Vietnam issue. Also available on a portion of the internal (N = 39) and external (N = 28) Ss were ACT scores obtained from the Kansas State University Counseling Center. In this sample, the mean ACT score for internals was 89.26 and for externals, 88.36. Again, there were no significant differences between these two groups.

DISCUSSION

Results of this study lend support to the general notion that individuals with a generalized expectancy that reinforcement is contingent upon their own behavior tend to actively engage in information-seeking to a greater degree than individuals who do not hold such a generalized expectancy. The primary hypothesis of this study was that in a situation not explicitly structured as either skill- or chance-controlled, internally oriented Ss will seek more information about the person they will attempt to influence and also attempt to learn more about the content of the issue involved than will externally oriented Ss.

Results provide partial support for this prediction. That is, internals sought significantly more information about the other person (the target of the influence process) than did externals, but there were no differences between the two groups in the amount of information sought about the content of the issue. Thus, it appears that internals, to a greater extent than externals, engage in behavior which will yield more information about the person they will interact with in the future and attempt to influence. The difference between internals and externals was not found, however, when Ss were given the opportunity to obtain information related to the Vietnam issue itself. Although an attempt was made to assess the amount of prior information about the Vietnam war, it is possible that this variable was not adequately controlled. An analysis of the Information Test indicated no differences in amount of prior knowledge about Vietnam between internals and externals. Carlson, James & Correre (1966), however, with a more comprehensive information test found that internals had significantly more knowledge of the Vietnam issue than externals. Thus, if internals did in fact have more prior knowledge in the present sample then it might be reasonable to expect that they would spend less time with magazine articles containing information about Vietnam. Consequently, initial differences in prior information between internals and externals would function to diminish the subsequent differences in information acquisition regarding the content of the Vietnam issue. Given, however, that the Information Test used in the present study was an adequate measure of prior information, it is possible that Ss did not feel they had enough time to examine the magazine articles on Vietnam. In the procedure, Ss were informed that E was going to answer a phone call and that he would

return shortly. Thus, it is possible that Ss felt they would have only a few minutes with the magazines and that this was not sufficient time to read and organize this information so that it would be helpful in their attempt to influence the other person. As a result, any difference in preference for information about the content of the issue between internals and externals may have been depressed by this potential artifact in the procedure. In addition, failure to find differences on this measure may have reflected a tendency for Ss to regard the experimental procedure with suspicion. The measure of time spent on relevant magazine articles occurred after E had twice left the room. Perhaps, by this time, Ss suspected that the real purpose of the experiment was not a study of social influences, and consequently felt less need to acquire information. Related to this interpretation, is the finding that internals resist attempts at subtle influence to a greater extent than externals (Gore, 1962). Thus, if internals perceived that the real purpose of the experiment was related to information-seeking, then it might be expected that they would resist E's suggestion that they examine the magazine articles.

The second hypothesis in this study was that Ss given skill instructions would seek more information than the group given chance instructions. It was reasoned that when Ss are led to believe that influencing the attitude of another person is dependent on their skill and ability, and thus under personal control, they will have a greater tendency to engage in information-seeking behavior because such information is perceived as more relevant to the task of inducing attitude change. In the change condition, Ss were instructed that attitude change is dependent on factors beyond their control. Thus, there should be less

tendency in this condition to acquire information since such information would not be perceived as particularly useful for the outcome of the influence process. The data from the present experiment, however, do not support this second hypothesis. The skill group did not differ significantly from the chance group on any of the three measures of information-seeking. Although contrary to expectation, it is apparent that the individual differences in internal-external control tended to decrease the difference between the skill and chance conditions. On the "questions-asked" measure, internals, in the skill condition, sought significantly more information than externals, while in the chance condition externals sought more information, though not significantly more than internals.

The third hypothesis stated that the magnitude of the differences in information-seeking between internals and externals will be greater in the ambiguous than in the skill or chance conditions. Here, it was reasoned that the presence of explicit situational cues concerning the expectancy for personal control would tend to diminish the effect of a generalized expectancy for control. Without such skill or chance cues, individual differences in internal-external control should play a greater role in determining the perception of the degree of personal control over the inducement of attitude change. Results of this study do not, however, lend support to this hypothesis. On none of the three measures are the differences in information-seeking between internals and externals greater in the ambiguous condition than in the skill or chance conditions. On the "questions-asked" measure, internals and externals differed significantly at about the same magnitude in the

skill and ambiguous situations, while there was no significant difference between the two groups in the chance situation.

It is evident from the examination of the data on the "questions-asked" measure that the primary reason why these last two hypotheses were not supported is due to the failure of the externals in the skill condition to seek information at the same level as internals in this condition. Performance in all other groups was consistent with the hypotheses. Thus, chance instructions tended to produce fairly equivalent levels of information-seeking between internals and externals, while in the ambiguous situation internals sought significantly more information than externals. In addition, consistent with the predictions, internals in the skill and ambiguous situations sought more information than internals in the chance situation.

There are at least several alternative explanations related to the question of why externals failed to increase their level of information acquisition in the skill situation. First, it might be argued that the skill instructions used in this present study were not sufficient in inducing an expectancy for personal control over the occurrence of attitude change. Thus, with more elaborate manipulation of the expectancy for internal control it might be expected that externals would seek information at about the same magnitude as internals.

Assuming for the moment that the skill instructions were sufficient in producing an expectancy for personal control among externals, it then is necessary to go to additional constructs to account for the results. Stated in another way, if externals in the skill condition did have an expectancy that inducement of attitude change was dependent upon their

behavior, then it is apparent that the internal-external control variable taken by itself is not sufficient to account for the performance of this group. Within the framework of Social Learning Theory (Rotter, 1954), behavior is viewed as a function of the value of the reinforcement and the expectancy that a particular behavior will lead to that reinforcement. Thus, information-seeking behavior in this study is a function of the value placed on inducing attitude change and the expectancy for success in inducing such change. Although the present study did not attempt to assess the relative influence of these variables, it is possible that either differences in reinforcement value or expectancy or both tended to produce the differences in information-seeking between internals and externals. For example, in a study of decision time, Rotter and Mulry (1965) found that in a skill situation internals took longer to make judgments than did externals, while there were no differences between the two groups in a situation structured as chance controlled. Since internals and externals, in this study, did not differ in their expectancy for success in making the judgments, the results were interpreted to mean that internals place more value on skill reinforcements, whereas externals tend to value chance reinforcements. On the basis of these results, it is possible that in the present study externals, even though in the skill situation they had an expectancy for personal control, placed lower value on the inducement of attitude change and consequently, sought less information than internals. In addition, it is further possible, that in skill situations, internals tend to have a higher expectancy for success than externals. It would seem reasonable that, based on their prior reinforcement history, externals would have a greater tendency than internals to believe that they

will not be as successful in situations in which outcomes are dependent upon their own behavior. With a low expectancy for exerting social influence, externals would then have less tendency to take action, in the form of information acquisition, to improve their chances of success. Thus, one or both of these variables could have been operating to produce the significant differences in information-seeking between internals and externals in the skill situation. Externals may place lower value on skill reinforcements and/or they may have a lower expectancy for success in skill situations, both of which might function to produce less information-seeking.

One further alternative hypothesis for the failure of the externals in the skill condition to seek as much information as internals may be related to both lower reinforcement value and/or lower expectancy for success among externals in social influence situations in general. The data suggest that regardless of skill, ambiguous, or chance cues, externals did not tend to vary over these situations. Thus, the cues associated with the social influence situation itself may operate to produce lower reinforcement value or lower expectancy regardless of whether the task is perceived as skill or chance controlled. The study by Phares (1965) in which internals were found to be superior to externals in exerting social influence would lend some support to this interpretation. This finding would suggest that in past social influence situations externals have not received the same magnitude of success experiences as have internals, which would, in turn, lower their expectancy for future success in inducing attitude change and, perhaps, in addition, lower the value placed on inducing attitude change. In any case,

attempts to assess the effects of reinforcement value and expectancy would appear to be a fruitful strategy in future research on the internal-external control variable.

Aside from the failure of the skill-external group to seek information on the same level as skill-internals, the results of this study add support to the construct validity of the internal-external control dimension. The finding that internals, to a greater extent than externals, engage in behaviors which will yield more information extends the results of the Seeman and Evans (1962) and Seeman (1963) studies. Thus, it appears that internals have more knowledge which is important for later outcomes, remember more of this information, and, on the basis of this study, actively seek information that will be useful in the future. It would seem that the "passive" behavior of externals in regard to information acquisition reflects the belief that outcomes tend to occur independent of their behavior. This approach is contrasted to that of internally oriented persons who actively engage in information-seeking behavior in order to increase their chances of success in attempting to control the environment. It may be noted that such obvious factors as intelligence and attitude toward the war in Vietnam were not seemingly operative in producing the differences in information acquisition between internals and externals. Thus, it appears that a major variable in the study of information preferences is the internal-external control dimension.

The results of this study also illustrate the importance of taking into account situational variables in predicting information-seeking behavior. One of the striking findings is that differences in information acquisition between internals and externals do not generalize

across situations that are explicitly skill or chance determined. As predicted, when the specific expectancy for chance control is manipulated through instructional cues, internals do not seek more information than externals. The implication of this result points to the importance of investigating both situational and dispositional constructs within the same study. If information-seeking was studied utilizing a task in which success was perceived as independent of behavior it is likely that little differences in performance between internals and externals would be observed. Generalizing from the results of the present study and from the Rotter and Mulry (1965) study, it is strongly suggested that in order to predict differences in behavior between internally and externally oriented persons it is crucial that the skill-chance cues associated with a task or situation be clearly specified.

SUMMARY

This study investigated the relationship between internal-external control (I-E) and information-seeking in a social influence situation. Forty-two Ss holding a generalized expectancy that reinforcement is dependent upon their own behavior (internals) and forty-two Ss holding a generalized expectancy that reinforcement is not contingent upon their behavior (externals) were led to believe that their task was to attempt to influence the attitude of another person concerning the war in Vietnam. During the procedure Ss were given an opportunity to acquire information both about the other person and about the Vietnam issue itself. A third of the eighty-four internal and external Ss were instructed that success in inducing attitude change was dependent on

their skill and ability (skill condition); another third was told that success in inducing attitude change was a matter of chance and luck (chance condition); the remainder of the Ss were given neither skill nor chance instructions (ambiguous condition). The results offered support for the major hypothesis that in the situation structured as neither skill nor chance controlled, internals would seek more information than externals. Also, as predicted, internals and externals did not differ in information-seeking in the chance condition. Contrary to expectations, externals sought significantly less information in the skill condition than internals. Failure to find support for this last hypothesis was discussed in terms of Social Learning Theory.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Social Reaction Inventory

This is a questionnaire to find out the way in which certain important events in our society affect different people. Each item consists of a pair (and only one) which you more strongly believe to be the case as far as you're concerned. Be sure to select the one you actually believe to be more true than the one you think you should choose or the one you would like to be true. This is a measure of personal belief: obviously there are no right or wrong answers.

Your answers to the items on this inventory are to be recorded on a separate answer sheet which is loosely inserted in the booklet. Remove THIS ANSWER SHEET NOW. Print your name and any other information requested by the examiner on the answer sheet, then finish reading these directions. Do not open the booklet until you are told to do so.

Please answer these items carefully but do not spend too much time on any one item. Be sure to find an answer for every choice. Find the number of the item on the answer sheet and black-in the space under the number 1 or 2 which you choose as the statement most true.

In some instances you may discover that you believe both statements or neither one. In such cases, be sure to select the one you more strongly believe to be the case as far as you're concerned. Also try to respond to each item independently when making your choice; do not be influenced by your previous choices.

REMEMBER

Select that alternative which you personally believe to be more true.

I more strongly believe that:

1. a. Children get into trouble because their parents punish them too much.
b. The trouble with most children nowadays is that their parents are too easy with them.
2. a. Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck.
b. People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.
3. a. One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics.
b. There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.
4. a. In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world.
b. Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries.
5. a. The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.
b. Most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.
6. a. Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader.
b. Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.
7. a. No matter how hard you try some people just don't like you.
b. People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.
8. a. Heredity plays the major role in determining one's personality.
b. It is one's experiences in life which determine what he is like.
9. a. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.
b. Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.

I more strongly believe that:

10. a. In the case of the well prepared student there is rarely if ever such a thing as an unfair test.
b. Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work, that studying is useless.
11. a. Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little to do with it.
b. Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.
12. a. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.
b. This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.
13. a. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.
b. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow.
14. a. There are certain people who are just no good.
b. There is some good in everybody.
15. a. In my case getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.
b. Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.
16. a. Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first.
b. Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability, luck has little or nothing to do with it.
17. a. As far as world affairs are concerned, most of us are the victims of forces we can neither understand, nor control.
b. By taking an active part in political and social affairs the people can control world events.

I more strongly believe that:

18. a. Most people don't realize the extent to which their lives are controlled by accidental happenings.
b. There really is no such thing as "luck."
19. a. One should always be willing to admit his mistakes.
b. It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes.
20. a. It is hard to know whether or not a person really likes you.
b. How many friends you have depends upon how nice a person you are.
21. a. In the long run the bad things that happen to us are balanced by the good ones.
b. Most misfortunes are the result of lack of ability, ignorance, laziness, or all three.
22. a. With enough effort we can wipe out political corruption.
b. It is difficult for people to have much control over the things politicians do in office.
23. a. Sometimes I can't understand how teachers arrive at the grades they give.
b. There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.
24. a. A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do.
b. A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are.
25. a. Many times I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me.
b. It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life.
26. a. People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.
b. There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.

I more strongly believe that:

- 27. a. There is too much emphasis on athletics in high school.
 - b. Team sports are an excellent way to build character.
- 28. a. What happens to me is my own doing.
 - b. Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.
- 29. a. Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do.
 - b. In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local level.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

1. The United States should continue its military support to South Vietnam.

agree	mildly agree	mildly disagree	disagree
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2. Peace marches and demonstrations are a threat to the security of the United States.

agree	mildly agree	mildly disagree	disagree
-------	-----------------	--------------------	----------

3. The United States has a moral obligation to withdraw its military support from Vietnam.

agree	mildly agree	mildly disagree	disagree
-------	-----------------	--------------------	----------

4. The bombing of North Vietnam should be halted.

agree	mildly agree	mildly disagree	disagree
-------	-----------------	--------------------	----------

5. Peace marches and demonstrations give an unfavorable impression of the United States to people in other countries.

agree	mildly agree	mildly disagree	disagree
-------	-----------------	--------------------	----------

6. I am in support of the views of those people who protest the United States' involvement in the war in Vietnam.

agree	mildly agree	mildly disagree	disagree
-------	-----------------	--------------------	----------

7. The independence of Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam was guaranteed by the Geneva Conference of 1954.

true	false
------	-------

8. The National Liberation Front is the political party in South Vietnam which is now supported by the United States.

true	false
------	-------

9. The United States has not officially declared war on the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese.
- true false
10. Ngo Dinh Diem is the current premier of North Vietnam.
- true false
11. Military aid to South Vietnam began during the administration of President Kennedy.
- true false
12. The United States has resumed the bombing of Hanoi.
- true false
13. North and South Vietnam is divided by the 17th parallel.
- true false
14. Senator Wayne Morse is in support of President Johnson's policy toward Vietnam.
- true false

APPENDIX C

1. I would prefer to have more information before I attempt to influence the subject.

(circle one) yes no

Below are listed various kinds of information that we can make available to you. Indicate the amount of information that you would prefer. Select only the amount and kind of information that would be useful to you for the purposes of this experiment.

2. Information concerning the government's policy toward Vietnam.

+ + + + +
no more some a great
deal more

3. Information from the tests and interviews about the subject.

+ + + + +
no more some a great
deal more

4. Information about some techniques to use in persuasion.

+ + + + +
none some a great
deal

5. Information that has been used by some to argue against the government's policy toward Vietnam.

+ + + + +
none some a great
deal

6. Information that has been used by some to argue in favor of the government's policy toward Vietnam.

7. A minute interview with the subject before you attempt to influence him.

A horizontal number line is shown with tick marks at intervals of 5, labeled 0, 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25. Above each tick mark is a plus sign (+).

APPENDIX D

Raw Data

I-E Scores

Subjects	Skill Internal	Ambiguous Internal	Chance Internal	Skill External	Ambiguous External	Chance External
1	20	18	18	9	10	7
2	18	18	21	9	10	10
3	20	18	18	5	7	10
4	20	18	18	7	10	4
5	20	18	19	8	9	9
6	19	18	19	7	10	8
7	19	20	19	9	8	8
8	18	19	20	10	9	10
9	18	18	18	7	9	9
10	20	21	20	9	9	7
11	18	18	21	9	8	10
12	22	21	18	9	7	10
13	22	21	18	9	8	8
14	19	18	21	8	10	9

Raw Data

Attitude Toward Vietnam War Scores

Subjects	Skill Internal	Ambiguous Internal	Chance Internal	Skill External	Ambiguous External	Chance External
1	20	21	21	24	23	24
2	23	20	22	23	24	21
3	20	22	21	23	24	20
4	23	22	21	22	24	21
5	23	20	20	21	21	23
6	20	21	21	20	20	24
7	22	23	22	21	20	24
8	22	22	23	23	21	20
9	23	21	21	23	23	23
10	23	20	21	22	21	21
11	20	22	24	21	20	23
12	20	23	23	22	20	21
13	22	20	22	21	24	20
14	22	20	24	20	24	21

Raw Data

Information Test Scores

Subjects	Skill Internal	Ambiguous Internal	Chance Internal	Skill External	Ambiguous External	Chance External
1	4	7	6	5	6	4
2	4	4	8	7	5	4
3	7	6	6	6	5	6
4	6	6	7	6	8	3
5	7	5	4	4	7	6
6	6	7	6	5	3	6
7	5	8	2	6	6	4
8	4	7	7	5	7	6
9	6	4	6	5	6	7
10	6	4	6	6	4	6
11	4	7	5	5	8	2
12	6	8	7	4	8	7
13	8	5	5	6	4	4
14	7	6	6	8	7	7

Raw Data

Number of Questions Asked

Subjects	Skill Internal	Ambiguous Internal	Chance Internal	Skill External	Ambiguous External	Chance External
1	0	6	4	2	9	3
2	8	8	4	0	0	6
3	8	11	10	0	0	3
4	6	10	4	0	0	6
5	14	4	0	6	5	4
6	1	15	0	10	1	3
7	9	9	0	7	8	6
8	7	0	5	4	10	9
9	19	2	9	0	0	17
10	6	3	2	8	3	7
11	6	8	0	4	4	7
12	6	12	10	0	2	2
13	5	7	4	0	4	1
14	5	5	0	0	0	0

Raw Data

Time on Relevant Magazine Articles

Subjects	Skill Internal	Ambiguous Internal	Chance Internal	Skill External	Ambiguous External	Chance External
1	362	000	553	39	524	365
2	53	000	000	15	000	000
3	518	000	60	000	213	195
4	50	478	000	000	574	000
5	148	49	14	453	000	126
6	311	65	332	485	000	000
7	327	206	539	353	542	472
8	65	460	582	120	143	366
9	209	000	516	80	000	337
10	000	23	276	554	515	000
11	153	000	000	000	529	000
12	439	168	72	534	55	000
13	000	580	279	164	000	263
14	160	496	20	426	000	557

Raw Data

Information Questionnaire Scores

Subjects	Skill Internal	Ambiguous Internal	Chance Internal	Skill External	Ambiguous External	Chance External
1	29	29	23	12	28	16
2	25	25	17	14	27	20
3	29	25	27	29	27	31
4	28	21	23	21	19	25
5	30	20	20	23	24	20
6	11	27	11	27	18	16
7	18	28	20	22	29	17
8	23	24	28	12	18	27
9	33	11	24	19	27	33
10	26	22	20	22	17	15
11	23	11	21	23	26	8
12	32	30	29	21	15	20
13	30	25	24	21	11	22
14	25	27	13	30	23	28

INTERNAL-EXTERNAL CONTROL AS A
DETERMINANT OF INFORMATION-SEEKING
IN A SOCIAL INFLUENCE SITUATION

by

WILLIAM L. DAVIS

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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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This study investigated the relationship between internal-external control (I-E) and information-seeking in a social influence situation. Forty-two Ss holding a generalized expectancy that reinforcement is dependent upon their own behavior (internals) and forty-two Ss holding a generalized expectancy that reinforcement is not contingent upon their behavior (externals) were led to believe that their task was to attempt to influence the attitude of another person concerning the war in Vietnam. During the procedure Ss were given an opportunity to acquire information both about the other person and about the Vietnam issue itself. A third of the eighty-four internal and external Ss were instructed that success in inducing attitude change was dependent on their skill and ability (skill condition); another third was told that success in inducing attitude change was a matter of chance and luck (chance condition); the remainder of the Ss were given neither skill nor chance instructions (ambiguous condition). The results offered support for the major hypothesis that in the situation structured as neither skill nor chance controlled, internals would seek more information than externals. Also, as predicted, internals and externals did not differ in information-seeking in the chance condition. Contrary to expectations, externals sought significantly less information in the skill condition than internals. Failure to find support for this last hypothesis was discussed in terms of Social Learning Theory.